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POINTS ABOUT THE PRIVATE NURSE

By ANNA A. DAVIDSON

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FIRST PAPER—THE LITTLE THINGS OF NURSING

How much do the little things count for? Is not life made up of little things? Frequently they count for more than the great things of life, and in nursing they should not be lost sight of, for if the nurse ignores them, the patient does not, and we are frequently being criticised when we least suspect it.

I have heard many criticisms from patients on nurses, principally on little things, and I am going to enumerate them for the benefit of the private nurse, although it may not harm the institutional nurse to stop and consider also.

"What do you want to eat now? will you have it hot or cold?" and then she leaves the kitchen door open (the patient was in a small apartment). "I hear her take the pitcher out of the ice-box, take out the saucepan, light the gas-stove, and by the time the food comes to me I have cooked and eaten it in imagination and hate the sight of it," complained one nervous woman who took nourishment badly, and tried three nurses before she found one who brought her food to her without discussing it first.

"She never helps me to sit up or supports me while I am up. When I ask her to help me, she takes hold of my hands and pulls me," said a weak woman with a pain in her side.

Leaving the bathroom door open while the water is running or a poultice being made, not thinking to oil a squeaking door or straighten a crooked picture, wearing rustling gowns or noisy shoes, dusting carelessly, not brushing up the room, leaving fancy-work or books lying about, sudden jerking movements, flapping shades, and rocking are a few of the little things that make a sick person miserable, and yet many of the best nurses do or neglect to do these things. Now, don't say "impossible," because it is a fact that I have several times heard nurses criticised for putting the thermometer back in the case without washing it. The only consolation I can find in this atrocious oversight is that I have known doctors to be condemned for the same thing, and, of course, "The king can do no wrong."

With many nurses the trouble is that they have never been ill themselves, and so don't appreciate the annoyance of these things. Some time when you are sick just watch for the little things; I am

sure you will then give them more attention. Anticipation is one of the greatest virtues of a nurse,—to prevent the patient asking for things, to stop reading before they say they are tired, to know when the open window is too cool, to think of the extra blanket in the chill of early morning, turning a heated pillow before they know what it is that troubles them,—these show the intuitive nurse.

Sympathy cannot be placed among the little things, it is one of the great things, almost, we might say, the key-stone of private nursing, and yet, alas! how many nurses lack this essential. We hear complaint of its lack on all sides, and the sad part of it is that it is too true to deny it.

Personally I would never employ a nurse who said she did not like her work, as so many do even to their patients' families. No doubt she would watch my pulse carefully enough, but sympathy needs to go hand in hand with medical science.

Nurses are too prone to let their work degenerate into a mere money-making employment. This it should never be. It requires too much of personal feeling, tact, sympathy, and self-sacrifice. The nurse's whole heart needs to be in it to make her a success, and she who wants only the money had better take up typewriting, for she is a useless commodity, a stumbling-block in the road of the true nurse, and a constant annoyance to the sick, although the doctor keeps her busy because she makes a good appearance and is scientifically correct.

(To be continued.)

STANDARDS OF LIVING *

By MARGARET DAVIDSON

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IF we accept the conclusion of the thoughtful students of human evolution and assume that what is represented by the term "home" is the germ of Anglo-Saxon civilization, the unit of social progress; that no community rises above the average of its individual homes in intelligence, courage, honesty, industry, thrift, patriotism, or any other individual or civic virtue; that the home is the nursery of the citizen; that nothing which church, school, or State can do will quite make up for the lack in the home,—then we must acknowledge that no subject can be of greater importance than a discussion of the standards involved

* Read at the May meeting of the Alumnae Association of the Toronto General Hospital.